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C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 001056

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STATE FOR NEA/ELA, EB/ESC/TFS, IO/T; COMMERCE FOR
BIS/TCHRISTINO; TREASURY FOR OIA/KCURTIN; BRUSSELS FOR
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TAGS: [EAIR](#) [EIND](#) [ETRD](#) [EU](#) [FAA](#)
SUBJECT: EU PUTS SYRIAN AIR ON NOTICE

REF: DAMASCUS 950

Classified By: A/DCM Todd Holmstrom for reasons 1.4(b/d)

EU ISSUES WARNING TO SYRIAN AIR

¶1. (C) On the margins of the 40th Annual General Meeting of the Arab Air Carriers Organization (AACO) in Damascus on October 23-25, Post learned that the European Aviation Safety Administration (EASA) was frustrated at Syrian Air's continued non-compliance with EASA safety standards and planned to enact punitive measures against the national airline. At an unrelated dinner, an Ambassador from an EU-member state confided to the Chargé that the EU was taking action regarding Syrian Air's substandard safety record. On October 25, a diplomat from the EU mission to Syria confirmed to Econoff that, as a result of consistently unsatisfactory ramp checks of Syrian Air aircraft at EU airports, EASA had issued a "final warning" letter to Syrian Air officials. The letter notified Syrian Air that the airline would be named to EASA's "blacklist" if it did not correct the identified safety deficiencies within a "certain number of days" (AFI).

A TALE OF TWO BLACKLISTS

¶2. (C) According to regional FAA representative, EASA actually has two blacklists with different criteria. The first, and longest list names airlines that are completely banned from operating at all European Community (EC) airports. The second list contains airlines that are subject to "operational restrictions" within the EC, such as limiting an airline's operations to specific models of aircraft rather than banning the entire fleet. These operational restrictions also permit listed airlines to use wet-leased aircraft of a different air carrier not subject to an operating ban.

WET-LEASE EFFORTS STILL PENDING

¶3. (C) In an attempt to sustain operations, Syrian Air issued

a tender to wet-lease aircraft in early September. To our knowledge, this contract has not yet been awarded, although local media reported that a bid from Iranian-owned Mahan Air was under consideration. Mahan Air, coincidentally, is included on the EASA blacklist of airlines completely banned from operating within the EC.

COMMENT

14. (C) Post does not know the exact length of time EASA is granting Syrian Air to take corrective action before blacklisting the airline, or which of the two blacklists EASA intends to use. However, given the age of its primarily Boeing fleet, we believe it unlikely that Syrian Air will be able to satisfy EASA's demands without completely overhauling or replacing these aircraft -- actions subject to the issuance of U.S. export licenses. End Comment.
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